

**Claim Amendments:**

Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application, as amended:

1. (Cancelled)
2. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 4~~6~~, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with the user~~a sending client computer system~~.
3. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 4~~6~~, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with a sending client computer system.
4. (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 3, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message comprises the following:
  - an act of the sending server computer system receiving a data field representing the user specified criteria with the instant message; and
  - an act of the sending server computer system reading the data field to identify the user specified criteria.
5. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 4~~6~~, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message comprises the following:
  - an act of reading a data field representing the user specified criteria from a database accessible to the sending computer system.
6. (Currently Amended) ~~A method of Claim 1, wherein~~In a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer

system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising:

an act of the sending computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the instant message to the user;

an act of the sending computer system sending the instant message to the destination computer system and receiving a successful acknowledgment message;

an act of the sending computer system, upon receiving a successful acknowledgement message, determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met; and

an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met, wherein the user specified criteria is a "single hop" criteria, and the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria have been met if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

7-11. (Cancelled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, whereinIn a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising:

an act of the sending computer system sending the instant message to the destination computer system;

an act of the sending computer system receiving a successful acknowledgment message for the sent instant message;  
a step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met; and  
an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met, wherein the user specified criteria is a single hop criteria; and  
the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

13-22. (Cancelled)

23. (Currently Amended) ~~The computer-readable medium of claim 22~~ A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a sending computer system to determine whether delivery of an instant message was successful, by a method comprising:

sending via a computer network the instant message to a destination computer system;  
receiving via the computer network a successful acknowledgement message for the instant message;  
determining whether the successful acknowledgement message satisfies a user-specified criterion for success of delivery of the instant message; and  
when it is determined that the user-specified criterion is satisfied, indicating that delivery of the instant message was successful, wherein the instant message is sent via a chain of one or more

computer systems to the destination computer system and the user-specified criterion specifies a single hop, and further wherein  
the delivery is successful when the first computer system in the chain receives the instant message.

24-30. (Cancelled)